

TO: Rochdale Council
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Statement

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1.0 Introduction and Purpose of Document

- 1.1 This Design, Access and Heritage Statement is submitted by Architectural Emporium Ltd to support the application to upgrade the First Floor of Touchstones arts centre including all 4 galleries, at the same time.
- 1.2 This application covers the remainder of works required in the building which are not already covered by the consented scheme as follows: Planning Permission Ref 23/00623/FUL and Listed Building Consent Ref 23/00624/LBC.
- 1.3 Touchstones is the Borough's main arts and heritage venue within the Grade II listed former public library. It is also located within the Rochdale Town Centre Conservation Area and in proximity to other designated and non-designated heritage assets. As such this Heritage Statement has been prepared to satisfy the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). As required by the NPPF, this statement considers the characteristics of the site and the adjacent heritage assets in sufficient detail to understand the potential impact of the proposals on their significance.
- 1.4 For consistency, this statement has been written in the same style as the statement prepared by BB Heritage which forms part of the approved scheme. BB Heritage should be credited for the content of that report and as such some of the information outlined here.

2.0 Development of the Site and Heritage Context

- 2.1 This Please refer to section 2.0 of the Heritage Statement submitted with the previous approved application. Ref 23/00623/FUL and Listed Building Consent Ref 23/00624/LBC.
- 2.2 Please also refer to the historic photographs and description as submitted in the drawing pack attached to this application.
- 2.3 The proportions of the original galleries seem to have remained largely intact until 1977 when a major refurbishment of the whole building took place. At this time the following alterations took place:
- 2.4 The original heating system was renewed and Exhibition boards were added throughout covering up the original tongue and groove finish behind.
 - 2.1 A lift was added creating a large glazed lobby in Gallery 2.
 - 2.2 A further glazed lobby was also added in Gallery 1 (now removed as part of the other permitted scheme)
 - 2.3 The rear partition in Gallery 2 was moved forward by 1 bay to create a larger store behind.



3.0 Assessment of Significance

3.1 An assessment of significance is a requirement for any planning application that affects a heritage asset. This section of the report provides an assessment of the heritage merit of the application site based on desk-based research and site visits. The assessment has been carried out with reference to the heritage values as defined in the English Heritage document Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidelines which can be summarised as follows;

- Evidential value – the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity (i.e. archaeological interest)
- Historical value – the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life are connected through a place.
- Aesthetic value – the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place (i.e. architectural and artistic interest)
- Communal value – the meanings of a place for the people that relate to it.

3.2 A statement of significance uses the following ‘grades’ of significance:

- Exceptional – the elements of the heritage asset which are of exceptional value (equivalent to Grade I)
- High – the elements of the heritage asset which are of high value (equivalent to Grade II*)
- Considerable – the elements of the heritage asset which are of moderate value (equivalent to Grade II)
- Some – the elements of the heritage asset which are of some value (equivalent to local listing status)
- Neutral – the elements of the heritage asset which have neutral value
- Negative – the elements of the heritage asset which have a negative impact or are visually intrusive
- Undefined – any elements which could be of heritage value but have yet to be determined due to lack of available information

3.3 Evidential Value

As noted above, evidential values are those that derive from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity (Conservation Principles para.35). These values will usually comprise physical remains inherited from the past and tend to be primarily archaeological in form. Consequently, the ability to understand and interpret the evidence is diminished in proportion to the extent of its removal or replacement (Conservation Principles para.36). The building itself has potential to yield evidential value relating to the 19th and early 20th century phases of construction, this has been diminished slightly by later alterations and the evidential value is considered to be limited to revealing construction materials, methods and past finishes for example. The ‘opening up works’ already complete within the first-floor galleries has revealed some of the original fabric including the tongue and groove gallery walls and some of the original ventilation system.

3.4 Historic Value

As noted above, historical values derive from the ways in which people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present day (Conservation Principles para.39). The evidence may be either illustrative or associative. The site and building of Touchstones have considerable illustrative and associative historical value. The building is important regionally and is locally significant in representing the wealth and



ambition of the area at the time. There is particular historical value in the ambition to provide a significant public cultural building including these galleries in particular. It is also an important part of the historical fabric of the Rochdale Town Centre Conservation Area and a key component of the Town Hall, Square & Esplanade Character Area showing the historic development of this part of the town centre.

3.5 Aesthetic Value

Aesthetic value derives from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place (Conservation Principles para 46), in particular architectural and artistic interest. The site and building of Touchstones have considerable aesthetic value both externally to the building fabric and setting and also internally. Externally the aesthetic value is principally derived from the original building materials and historic detailing, key elements of the setting also contribute to the aesthetic value. Internally the principal plan form and phases of construction remain highly legible. The aesthetic value has been diminished in areas where later alterations have been made which have removed or concealed historic detailing or finishes such as on the walls of all 4 galleries. However, there are still key elements of historic value such as historic floor finishes and exposed roof structure.

3.6 Communal Value

Communal value derives from the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory (Conservation Principles para 54). As a building which was intended for public use and has been in constant public use since its original construction in 1884, the site of Touchstones has considerable communal value. It could be argued that as a later addition the galleries themselves have slightly less significance than the original library but this is negligible.

3.7 Conclusions & Capacity for Change

The site and building of Touchstones as assessed previously (Ref 23/00623/FUL and Listed Building Consent Ref 23/00624/LBC) has some evidential value and considerable historic, aesthetic and communal value. The values are derived from its construction as an important public asset, its continual use as a public asset, the historic materials and detailing and its expression of its region and locality. The first floor galleries are no different to this original assessment. Whilst there have been some changes made over the C20th and C21st centuries which have removed/covered some of the historic fabric there remains significance in the roof, behind the exhibition screens and across the floor surfaces.

The list below highlights the areas of main significance:

High = Low Capacity for Change

- Original tongue and groove panelling (as seen in the historic photos) now for the most part covered in a cementitious board (or similar)
- Ceiling structure and associated timber detailing
- Original ceiling grills leading to the roof vents



Medium = Medium Capacity for Change

- Ventilation system which is no longer in use. Currently visible from the outside only

Low = High Capacity for Change

- Heating system
- Passenger lift
- Lobbies
- Exhibition Boards
- Lighting Rig
- Internal Blinds



4.0 Proposed Works & Heritage Impact Assessment

4.1 This application is an 'extension' to the previous approved applications Ref Planning Permission Ref 23/00623/FUL and Listed Building Consent Ref 23/00624/LBC. This application covers the proposed works to Gallery 1,2,3 and 4 only. Following a successful funding bid which allowed Your Trust and Rochdale Borough Council to develop the ground floor and basement, further funding was realized which has allowed the team to now address the final area of the building.

4.2 Heritage Impact Assessment

The project requirements do involve a series of alterations / interventions to be made. The following impact assessment is structured as follows;

- assessment of changes due to physical alterations / interventions to the built fabric
- assessment of changes to the setting

4.3 Assessment of changes due to physical alterations / interventions to the built fabric

Exhibition Boards

- Replacement of all exhibition boards in Galleries 2,3 and 4. The boards will be replaced using a new metal/timber frame and timber battens but utilizing the same fixing points in the original wall as described on the submitted drawings. No alterations will be made to any of the existing fabric attached to the wall and as such the alterations will have a **very minor impact**. The new exhibition boards will also be placed closer to the walls and therefore more like the original condition which will have a **beneficial impact**.
- Replacement of exhibition boards in Gallery 1. The board itself is the only thing to be changed in this room, utilizing the current metal frame and timber batten system behind. This will therefore have **no impact** at all on the historic fabric.

Natural Ventilation

- Reinstatement of the original ventilation system in Galleries 2,3 and 4. The original ventilation grills (still visible externally) will be reopened by creating a hole internally and inserting a modern control system as described on the submitted drawings and M&E information. The required holes will be fully surveyed internally to locate them before carefully removing the historic fabric. The proposed internal opening will be to the extent of the external grill only. As described the fabric removal is to be kept to a minimum and will have a **very minor negative impact**. The resultant reinstatement of a controlled natural ventilation system will far outweigh the negatives and have a **beneficial impact** on the future preservation of historic fabric.
- Reinstatement of extract to turrets to all suitable gallery spaces. A mix of passive and mechanical ventilation is proposed. The original ceiling grills will be maintained with new exhaust ductwork installed above. All



new ductwork will be hidden within the ceiling void preventing the need for any interventions showing in the gallery space. As such this intervention will have a **very minor impact**.

Heating

- New heating system in Galleries 2,3 and 4. A new low level heating system utilizing appropriate slimline radiators will be installed behind a new timber frame and grill system reminiscent of the original historic detail and as described on the submitted drawings. The new system also improves the environmental conditions of the space and is far more efficient offering significant environmental benefits. As such the proposed intervention is deemed to have a **beneficial impact**.
- Replacement of heating system in gallery 1. A continuation of the proposed new heating system, however it will be hidden behind the exhibition boards in this gallery. As there is no change to the current situation and new radiators will be routed in the same positions as they are now, the proposed intervention will have **no impact** at all on the historic fabric.

Climate Control

- Installation of new close control units. 2 no. close control units will be installed in Gallery 4 to provide an environment where high value travelling exhibitions can be shown in the new gallery. Whilst this infrastructure is vital to the ongoing ability of the gallery to bring nationally significant collections to Rochdale the units themselves will have a **minor negative impact** on the space, however this will be mitigated by integrating them into the new exhibition walls and partitions and only a small route required to outside for the supply as described in the submitted drawings.
- A new door will also be required between Gallery 3 and 4 in order for the close control system to work effectively. There is sufficient evidence that a door existed in this location when the galleries were originally designed. The doors will be designed to be in keeping with the original and therefore this intervention could have a **beneficial impact** on the historic space in allowing the visitor to better understand the original vision.

Partitions

- Relocation of partition in Gallery 2. The current store partition is not in its original location and significantly alters the original proportions of the room. It also sits directly below one of the original ornate roof trusses. The partition will be moved back to its original location with a single store door instead of two. This re-exposes the original roof light behind back into the main space, restores the original proportions of the room and allows the original roof structure to be seen again. As such this proposal will have a **very beneficial impact** on the historic fabric
- Installation of free-standing partition to Gallery 04. This partition is to sit in front of goods lift and provide additional exhibition board space within the gallery but to also allow the good's lift original doors to be exposed into the space. The exhibition board will not go any higher than the perimeter boards and as such will not interrupt any of the roof structure. The current detail involves exhibition doors covering the lift which are impractical and look unsightly so the new proposal will significantly improve the situation. The partition will be floor mounted but with minimal fixings in to the historic floor and it will be designed in a



way that it can easily be removed or moved if required. Therefore, it will have only a **minor impact** on the historic environment.

Lighting

- New lighting system throughout the galleries. The lighting principles in each of the galleries are to remain the same i.e. suspended track lighting with adjustable spotlights. However, all new lighting is to be LED with more control over individual fittings to enable lighting to be dimmed as needed for each exhibition or artefact. Installation of circuits shall be wired in LSF single core cables 6491B cables, concealed within suitable containment systems and within the building fabric where possible. Emergency lighting shall be provided as self-testing LED fittings. As there is no change to the strategy and or fixing etc then this intervention has **no impact** on the historic space.

Window Blinds

- Refurbishment of existing window blinds and 2 no. new blinds on newly exposed original roof lights due to relocation of partition in Gallery 2. As there is no change to the strategy and or fixing etc then this intervention has **no impact** on the historic space.

Other MEP Items

- Further minor MEP Items as described in the Mechanical and Electrical Services document and drawings submitted.

4.4 Assessment of changes to the setting

- All works as covered by this application are to the interior of the building. No changes to the external elevation or outside generally, apart from a very minor route for pipework to the close control units are required. The original ventilation grills as seen from the outside will remain in situ and not touched. Therefore, the works covered in this application will have no effect on the setting of the building.



5.0 Statutory Requirements

5.1 The aim of the following statement is to demonstrate that the proposed works meet the requirements of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation) Act 1990 and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

5.2 PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) ACT 1990

- Section 66 of the Act requires that in considering whether to grant listed building consent special regard should be given to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses and that 'considerable importance and weight' should be attached to any harm to a designated heritage asset.
- **Response:** The proposals seek to improve the environmental conditions of the first floor allowing a greater variety of exhibition and an enhanced visitor experience. The first floor has seen significant changes in the past such as the covering of the original walls and ventilation openings. The interventions as described here, have relatively little impact on the historic environment and in some cases have a beneficial impact on the historic fabric. All interventions are internal and therefore have no impact on the external setting of the building.

5.3 National Planning Policy Framework

5.3.1 Section 16 (paras 189-208) of the NPPF is specific to conserving and enhancing the historic environment

5.3.2 Para 197 states; *'In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:*

- *the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation*
- *the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
- *the desirability of the new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.'*

Response: The proposals as outlined in this application seek to promote the galleries as part of Touchstones to a wider audience and as such can significantly enhance the building's contribution to sustainable communities and its economic viability.

5.3.3 Para 200 states; *'Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification'*

Response: As described above the proposals outlined in this application do require some change, however those changes have been justified and minor negative impacts, mitigated by the proposed installation methods etc.



5.3.4 Para 202 states; *'Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate securing its optimum viable use.'*

Response: The proposals will overall lead to a very low level of harm. This low level of harm is considered to be significant outweighed by the public benefits of the scheme.



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6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 The NPPF requires planning applicants and local planning authorities to assess and understand the particular nature of the significance of heritage assets which will be affected by proposed development. Such assessment of heritage asset significance is necessary to understand the potential impact of proposed development.
- 6.2 This report considers the nature of the significance of the proposed site, adjacent heritage assets and their setting.
- 6.3 The proposed development requires some physical alterations, the extent of which is considered to be limited and will lead to a very low level of harm. This low level of harm is considered to be significantly outweighed by the public benefits of the scheme.
- 6.4 Therefore, the proposals are considered to meet the requirements of the NPPF.

